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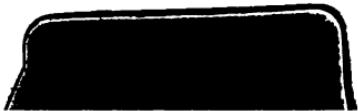
AMERICAN  
YARNS & FABLES.

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W. PHILLIPS THOMPSON.



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AMERICAN  
YARNS & FABLES

BY

W. PHILLIPS THOMPSON.



LONDON  
SIMPKIN, MARSHALL & CO.

LIVERPOOL  
EDWARD HOWELL.

1878.

280 . 0 . 255 .

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## P R E F A C E .

**THESE** Poems were not designed for publication, but at  
the request of numerous friends they have been printed.

Most of them were composed for amusement while  
travelling during a long series of horseback journeys in  
America.



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## TAKING THINGS LITERALLY.

*“ Answer a fool according to his folly.”—(Proverbs.)*

With frame of Nature's noblest mould,  
For hero deeds he seemed designed ;  
O'er all his face ye well might trace  
The impress of a master mind ;  
Yet in the paths of worldly fame  
John Dobson ne'er had sought to stray ;  
With quiet zeal and heavenly flame,  
The Quaker preacher held his way.  
Yet once he felt a great concern—  
His heart within him seemed to burn  
In Christian love to travelling go  
And preach the Word round Buffalo.  
There lived within that frontier town  
A sad young rake named Sampson Brown.  
It chanced they met ; said Sampson—“ Friend,  
Do you and your queer sect pretend  
To *literal* take the old command—  
‘ If any man shall raise his hand,  
And smite you on the cheek—that you  
Should meekly turn the other too ? ’ ”

“ Yea,” said the preacher ; “ Then take that,”  
Said Brown ; and striking full and flat,

He smote the Quaker’s cheek ;—  
At once o’er all John Dobson’s face  
The crimson flush—of pain—took place

Yet calmly did he speak :—

“ Young man,” he said, “ and hast thou read  
Unto that sermon’s end instead

Of stopping at that verse ? ”

“ Yes,” said the other, “ Then,” said John,  
Thou’st seen a trifle further on

The words I now rehearse :—

‘ With whatsoever measure ye  
To others mete, the same shall be  
Measured to you again ; ’ and I  
Obedience to this last shall try,

Before I note the first. ”

Then down on Brown’s devoted frame

A perfect hail of bruises came,  
Until he feared—from out of flame  
A being whom we will not name

Had full upon him burst.

He screamed and roared—but all in vain,

Until in agonizing pain

He reasoned in a different vein,

And cried, “ Stop ! stop ! you far out-strain  
*The measure that is owing.* ”

“ I know,” said John,—“ but Scriptures say—  
‘ Thou shalt unto thy neighbour pay  
Full measure, heaped up every way,  
    Pressed down and over-flowing ; ’  
That is the measure I propose  
To give to thee,—so now here goes ! ”  
“ But, oh ! ” cried he, “ you’ve done that now ”  
“ Yea,” said the Quaker, “ but I trow  
Another text prevades my mind—  
“ That whatsoe’er thy hand shall find  
To do,—that do with all thy might ; ’  
And scarcely half my power to smite  
Has so far been bestowed on thee,  
Therefore thy wish can not yet be.”  
Then down again his pounding poured  
Regardless how young Sampson roared,  
Nor ever stopped his sinewy flail  
Until his breath began to fail.  
Then from the Quaker’s loving heart  
His duty’s burden seemed to part,  
From further work relieved,—he felt  
Sufficient discipline was dealt.  
Resting, he said, in accents bland—  
“ I now obey the first command, ”  
And full on Brown (distressed and weak)  
He calmly turned “ the other cheek. ”  
He then remarked, “ Misguided friend,

This counsel I to thee extend,  
 Take it and be not vexed ;—  
 With prayer and care the Scriptures read,  
 Upon the *whole* then found thy creed,  
 Not *on a single text.* ”

---

## BOAT SONG.

“ Steam-boat explosions are now a matter of almost hourly occurrence on the western rivers of America.”—*English Paper.*

Lone in a shanty  
 Hard by Missouri  
 Sat an old couple,  
 Sally and Ned ;  
 Patchy the roof seemed,  
 Weak were the rafters,  
 Save where some *strong* beams  
 Sheltered a bed.

Ned sat upon that,  
 Whittling an axe-helve,  
 While by the fire sat  
 Spinning, his spouse.  
 “ Steamer,” she muttered,  
 Hearing a puffing,  
 (Steamers were frequent,)  
 Ned did not rouse.

Curious noises  
Quickly succeeded,  
(Noises of all kinds  
Boats often made,)  
Dreadful explosion  
Followed the noises,  
(Blow-ups were frequent,  
Nothing was said.)

But 'neath the *strong beams*,  
Moving her distaff,  
Sal, by her husband,  
Worked as before ;  
While through the rafters  
Fell a man headlong,  
Who, by the blow, lay  
Stunned on the floor.

Waiting his waking  
Both went on working,  
(Naturally men fell  
After a burst.)  
Soon, he recovering,  
Asked them the damage,  
“ Twenty in green-backs,”  
Ned answered first.

“ Me give you twenty !  
I'll see you hanged first ! ”  
Loud the indignant  
Stranger replied.  
“ Twenty,” said Ned, our  
Regular charge is,  
No one on less terms  
Here would reside.

“ Stop,” said he, “ Last week  
I at Chicago,  
Falling through roof and  
Uppermost flat,  
Smashing the *floor*,  
As well as the shingles,  
Only was charged ten  
Dollars for that.”

Stubbornly Ned held  
On to the twenty,  
Till the intruder,  
Hurling the cash,  
Swore he would ne'er, when  
Blown up in those parts,  
Fall down on *their* roof  
After the crash.

Ned, while he muttered,  
“ Plenty there will be  
Only too glad though  
    You hold aloof, ”  
Filled up a printed  
Form for the joiner,  
Who by a contract  
    Mended the roof.

---

## HENRY CLARE.

Henry Clare, an English yeoman,  
Made his home in Indiana,  
On a gentle rolling prairie,  
    To the hunter only known.  
Soon the country all around him,  
By the whites was thickly peopled,  
Till the Indian's memory lingered,  
    In the country's name alone.  
Henry Clare was fond of fruit trees,  
Near his house he reared an orchard,  
Apples, pears, and plums, and peaches,  
    Of the rarest kinds had he,  
But as old age gained upon him,  
Troubled much with pains rheumatic,  
Oft he found the needful pruning,  
    Quite beyond his strength to bear.

Once, when work was much behind hand,  
Came a German newly landed,  
Who in quaint outlandish English,  
    Asked him if he wished a hand,  
“Are you skilled in pruning fruit trees?”  
Queried Henry Clare, with caution;  
“Vot you mean by dat verd ‘pruning’?  
    I small Ingleese undarestand.”

“Why ‘tis trimming, lopping branches,  
Cutting out the useless wild wood.”  
“Oh! yah, yah,” exclaimed the German  
    “ I do pruning undarestand.”  
Well then, Henry Clare made answcr,  
“Meet me prompt at six to-morrow,  
In the corner of my orchard,  
    Nearest neighbour Jones’s land.

I will show you how I want it,  
We will prune the trees together,  
Row by row we’ll do the pruning,  
    ‘Till no useless wood remain.”  
Came the morning cold and drizzley,  
And when six o’clock resounded,  
Henry feared to face the weather,  
    With his sharp rheumatic pain.

So within the distant corner,  
Of his orchard stood the German,  
Waiting till he came to show him,  
    How he wished him prune the trees.  
Half-past six and seven sounded,  
While the German stood in waiting  
Then his zeal forbad him longer,  
    Waste the time in useless ease.

“ Since de mastare no be coming  
I veel do de prune vidout him,  
Pruning is but ‘ trimming, lopping,  
    Cutting down de useless vood,  
Vot he veeshed to show nie doubtless,  
Vos de vay he veesht dem heaped,  
I veel darcfor do de pruning,  
    And veel aftare pile it good ”

Fierce his axe he swung about him,  
Till when breakfast horn resounded  
Twenty of the finest fruit trees,  
    No more in that orchard stood.  
Henry Clare in speechless horror  
Heard the man describe at breakfast,  
How to save the morning hour,  
    He had set to “ prune de vood.”

Earth is but our Maker's orchard,  
Where he wishes all to labour,  
But he bids us wait in patience,  
    Till he gives us work to do.  
If we do what we think proper,  
Waiting not for his commanding,  
We shall take to working wrongly,  
    And our zeal hereafter rue.

---

## WRECK OF THE GRAND HOTEL.

A Stranger rode into Jackson-town  
Weary and worn ; he asked a clown,  
Who sat on the fence,—which he would say  
To the Grand Hotel was the nearest way.  
The loafer stared, then answered low,  
In broken accents, sad and slow,  
    “ Gone is the Grand Hotel.”

“ Gone ! why you don't mean to say it has bust !  
I thought that the owner had piles of ‘ dust ! ’  
Or may be a fire has ‘ raked his pool ; ’  
Or he's leased the place for a boarding school ? ”  
The loafer sighed, then answered,—“ No,  
I'll tell you as how it chanced to go,  
    For *gone* is the Grand Hotel !

On Ramsay's creek, in Kentuck state,  
I raised two powerful steers of late,  
They ate—oh heavens ! how they did eat !  
While all creation in *work* they beat.  
I came to Jackson-town to trade,  
And while I liquored my oxen staid  
To feed at the Grand Hotel.

I tied my steers to the stanchion ring  
In front of the house, and bade them bring  
An ocean of feed, for I had some fear  
As seeing a field of clover near.  
Alas, the villains ! they only brought  
A single haystack ! and that was nought  
To those steers at the Grand Hotel !

Meanwhile, as I liquored, we felt a shake,  
The floor and the ceiling began to quake,  
I rushed to the window and saw with despair  
My steers had eaten their hay-rick bare  
And were making tracks for the clover field,  
Eating what fodder their way might yield  
And dragging the Grand Hotel.

I screamed and shouted, ' Wo ! Wo, Jack ! Wo !  
Wo, Buck ! ' but, alas ! it was all no go.  
They tore along at a headlong rate  
O'er stoney ground with friction great,

Till all the bottom they wore away,  
And the lower stories were gone that day  
From Jackson's Grand Hotel !

We made for the back, and reached the ground  
As the building gave a tremendous bound ;  
For the steers with the crashing had taken fright,  
And were scudding along with all their might !  
Their speed was quicker by far than the wind,  
They left a telegram *miles* behind,  
As they dragged the Grand Hotel !

Not brick nor iron such work could stand !  
The structure wore as it had been sand !  
And the last that was seen of the durned old thing  
Was my oxen dragging the stanchion ring  
Three thousand miles from this wretched town ;  
So I rather guess they have done me brown,  
And gone—with the Grand Hotel."

"Tis strange how human feelings flow  
At simple truthful tales of woe ;  
While scenes by harrowing fiction dressed  
Draw forth a passing sigh at best.  
O'ercome the stranger wept to hear,  
And often since has he dropped a tear  
On the fate of the Grand Hotel.

## THE PIOUS STRANGER.

The Gun went off by accident,  
 And, with a piercing yell,  
 Down on the cold stone parapet  
 A passing stranger fell ;  
 They bore him to a neighbouring house  
 To have the puncture dressed,  
 But in the region of his heart,  
 The ball had pierced his vest.

Few hoped that he could yet survive  
 But when they came to probe,  
 They found a pocket bible hid  
 Beneath his ample robe ;  
 The ball had pierced the sacred book,  
 And lodged beneath the skin,  
 A bad flesh wound—but that was all,  
 His life was safe within.

Forthwith throughout the country round  
 Like lightning spread the fame,  
 At once the lion of the place  
 The stranger youth became ;  
 A writer of religious tracts  
 From Manchester came down  
 And soon the tract society  
 Emblazoned his renown.

The ladies sent their hot-house flowers  
To deck around his bed,  
Or brought their goody goody books  
And to him sweetly read ;  
At chapel, on the midweek eve,  
The local preacher took  
For text “ the pious stranger youth  
Who loved the sacred book.”

“ Doubtless,” he cried, “ from early days,  
By christian parents led,  
He learned to love the sacred page  
Which he so constant read ;  
And now a special providence,  
Has saved the good young man,  
And with the Bible that he loved  
Has lengthened out his span.”

“ And thus,” he said, “ throughout all time,  
The deeds of godly men,  
Like seed upon the waters thrown  
Redound to them again ;  
May you dear congregation  
Follow this stranger youth,  
And as he loved the sacred book  
So you uphold the truth.”

Then they raised a grand subscription  
Ere he got well again,  
The Vicar put down ten and six,  
The Squire gave one pound ten ;  
And all subscribed, both great and small,  
Throughout the country round,  
Till they came to Friend Abinadab  
A colporteur renowned.

But Friend Abinadab looked grave,  
He slowly shook his head,  
“Have ye a strict enquiry made  
Into this case,” he said ;  
“For if ye have not, much I fear  
That this will prove the man  
Who stole a bible from my stall,  
And cross the market ran.”

Alas for all the poetry  
Of my poor simple tale !  
Our Friend Abinadab was right,  
And at the county gaol  
The Superintendent testified  
He knew the man full well,  
For thirteen times before had he  
Been tenant of a cell.

## MAHOMET.

The Prophet of Arabia lay  
 Beneath a palm tree's cooling shade ;  
 Dreamed of his wide extending sway,  
 As conquests that the Lord had made.

He woke, and bending o'er his side,  
 His foeman stood with lifted brand,  
 " Whom hast thou now," fell Durther cried,  
 " To save thee from my murderous hand ? "

" God will protect me," from the foe  
 In strong surprise the falchion fell,  
 Mahomet grasped it from below,  
 Firm in the hand that fought so well.

The tide was turned, Mahomet knelt,  
 With Durther 'neath his bended knee,  
 " Say whom, or ere my blow be dealt,  
 Hast thou at hand to rescue thee. "

" No one, alas, " poor Durther sighed,  
 Mahomet still the death blow stayed,  
 " Then mercy learn from me " he cried,  
 And calmly handed back the blade.

They both arose, no more at strife,  
 For Durther knelt upon that sod,  
 And vowed to consecrate his life  
 To Islam and to Islam's God.

Years past, and when dark days drew round,  
When sternest Moslems seemed to bend,  
In Durther long Mahomet found,  
A faithful follower and a friend.

---

## THE BEAVER'S COURSHIP.

Where amid the rocky mountains  
Great Missouri's rolling river  
Rising as a gentle streamlet  
Wanders down the sylvan vale,  
Hard beside a strong embankment,  
Built by old Armeek their father,  
Dwelt two brethren stalwart beavers,  
“ Castor ” named, and “ Trowel-tail.”

Long with old Armeek they tarried,  
Building dams, repairing wigwams,  
Gathering piles of bark and cuttings  
Jointly 'gainst a wintry day ;  
Then there fell a cold estrangement  
'Twixt these brethren of the forest.  
Oft their father missed their presence  
As they silent stole away.

Near them, in a neighbouring valley,  
Dwelt the gentle dark eyed Oola,  
Of all lovely beaveresses,

Fairest in her prime was she !  
Both the brethren loved her dearly,  
Each had asked her hand in marriage,  
Vowed, without her, life a burden  
Of the dreariest kind would be.

While she lingered, fierce the rivals  
Joined in combat, till they heard her  
Sternly calling, " Cease from fighting,  
Or the vanquished I will wed.

Go your ways adown the valley,  
Seek for sites to build embankments,  
Each prepare a nuptial chamber  
Ere the autumn leaves be red.

Then with old Armeek your father,  
I will visit both your wigwams,  
And the one that shows the fairest  
He shall Oola gain for wife."  
Hopefully they both departed,  
Found locations near together,  
While in long and strenuous labour  
Each forgot his former strife.

Castor famed for steady plodding,  
Built a dam of small dimensions,  
Deep enough to guard his dwelling  
And to store his winter food.  
Next beneath an ancient hemlock,  
Where the roots o'er-hung the water,  
There he scooped a burrow chamber,  
Snug indeed, but small and rude.

Round the dam he felled the hard wood,  
Stripped the bark and tender branches.  
These he sunk around his dwelling,  
In the water calm and deep.  
On the bank above his chamber  
Firm he piled the refuse timbers ;  
In the pond to guard his entrance,  
There he also placed a heap.

With a look of calm derision,  
Trowel-tail beheld his rival  
Digging from his burrow dwelling  
Earth to build his humble dam.  
“ I,” said he, “ will build a wigwam  
Grandest of all beaver lodges,  
And will flood my bounded water  
Where no creature ever swam.”

Thrice his utmost length in thickness  
Rose the walling of his chamber,  
While upon its ample roomage

Twenty beavers free could lie.  
Oft his neighbours, much misgiving,  
Viewed the giant lodge with wonder,  
Queried why he built his flooring  
From the water up so high.

But he answered, proudly scorning,  
"I will teach you wigwam building !  
Watch and see my grand embankment  
Pile the waters round my floor."  
But the days began to shorten  
Ere the walls were well completed,  
Then he found his engineering  
Failed to roof the chamber o'er.

So enforced to build it smaller  
Many a day he sadly laboured,  
Till the autumn found his dwelling  
High exposed above the shore,  
For the ground embankment sundered  
Just as he had nearly raised it  
'Gainst a pressure beaver structures  
Never in creation bore.

Then his store of bark and cuttings  
With the bursting far were scattered,  
While his lodge roof raised so roughly,  
Failed to shed the driving rain.

So the gentle Oola coming  
With their father in the autumn,  
Castor's work pronounced the fairest,  
Trowel-tail's as all in vain.

“ But,” said Trowel-tail, in pleading,  
“ Had you come before the freshet,  
You had seen my grand embankment  
And my piles of winter food.  
Then my wigwam, now so leaky,  
With a trifle stronger roofing,  
Would have shone in splendid contrast  
To my rival's chamber rude.”

“ Trowel-tail,” she calmly answered,  
“ You have then this consolation—  
As you *nearly* built a homestead  
So you *nearly* gained a wife.”  
Thus it is with man's applauding,  
“ Tis not by our grand endeavours,  
But by what success attends them  
That the world will view our life.

## EPITAPH ON A DORMOUSE.

In a cage all warm and cozy  
 Was dear little " Brownie " kept,  
 Apples and nuts were his daily food,  
 Daily his cage was swept ;  
 But his owner's fond caresses  
 Were still through winter plied,  
 Till lacking sleep in snow time deep,  
 The dear little dormouse died.

---

## THE BEAVER EMPIRE.

In the forest days of old  
 Trowel-tail, a beaver bold,  
 Dammed the Alder Creek ;  
 Where the birch and maple stood,  
 And the osiers formed a wood  
 Where the stream was weak.

There he raised a stalwart band  
 Champions long in beaver-land,  
 Spreading far and wide ;  
 Till their numerous dams around  
 Took the forest depths profound,  
 Thick on every side.



Never in the ages past  
Had a race obtained such vast  
    Empire o'er the land.  
Not the sagest wolverine  
Could o'ercome the watery screen  
    Which their father planned.

Loud the prophets of the time  
Sang in lofty beaver-rhyme  
    Of their conquering race ;  
How their land-devouring wiers  
Should through long succeeding years  
    Hold conspicuous place.

Yet in all their pride and power  
Rose a dreadful cloud to lour  
    O'er their bright career ;  
As a race of deadly fame  
From the isles of ocean came,  
    Armed with axe and spear.

Swift before the arts of man  
Fell the famous beaver clan,  
    While their forest scene,  
Scarcely, in its altered guise,  
Shows to keen enquiring eyes  
    Where their dams have been.

Like this ancient beaver race  
Man now holds the foremost place  
    On this earthly ball ;  
Let him not in pride forget  
O'er him reigns a mightier yet  
    Sovereign Lord of all.

---

## THE FAIRY AND THE CLUBMOSS.

Once a gentle fairy wandering  
    O'er a desert mountain side,  
Saw the stag's-horn clubmoss growing  
    Where all other plants had died.

Saw the spikes of golden yellow  
    Shooting from the branching green ;  
Till it seemed to her a flower  
    Fairer than she e'er had seen.

Then she dug it up so gently,  
    And away she bore it straight  
To a bank of richest culture,  
    Near a stately mansion's gate.

There with greatest care she placed it,  
    And she watched it day by day ;  
Training up its lovely branches  
    In a weird artistic way.

Yet, while all its brethren flourished  
On the desert mountain side,—  
Constantly it grew less healthy,  
Till at last it drooped and died.

Then the spirit of the clubmoss  
Told the fairy of the cause,  
“ If a creature wish to flourish  
It must live by nature’s laws.

Slothful ease, luxurious living  
Oft engender swift decay ;  
All the energies of nature  
Thus are frittered fast away.

On the bleak and barren mountain,  
Where the clubmoss had to fight  
With the sturdy calls of hunger,  
And the wintry whirlwind’s might,—

All its powers were called in action,  
Till it rose in glorious bloom ;  
While the pampered child of fortune  
Sank into an early tomb.”

## THE GRUMBLING HORSE.

Free in a meadow of grasses and clover  
 The steeds of two travellers were turned out to play.  
 Jim was a shaggy beast, haggard all over,  
 Ned was a fine, glossy, beautiful bay.

Jim never long in a single spot stopping,  
 Eating a bit here, another bit there,  
 Coming where Ned was contentedly cropping,  
 Said to the latter, with sorrowful air,

“Oh ! such a vile and contemptible feeding,  
 Never before have I had to endure ?  
 Clover is scarce, and the grass is just seeding  
 Famished we shall be ere long, I am sure.”

“Really,” said Ned, looking up most politely,—  
 “ I never, fair stranger, had noticed before,  
 The grass in this meadow you speak of so lightly,  
 As worse than in those where I fattened of yore.”

“Likely enough,” answered Jim in derision,  
 “But I have been raised on respectable fare,  
 And searching my lifelong career in revision,  
 Nothing I find that with this can compare.”

“There !” said a mule who had witnessed his raising,  
 “ Strikingly true is the *last* that you said !  
 Have you had such *excellent* grazing,  
 Over which you are shaking your head.”

Jim heard in silence this lecture so humbling,  
Instances like it we meet as we roam,  
Men who abroad are incessantly grumbling,  
Oft have the meanest of living at home.

---

### THE PONY AND THE HAYSTACK.

Taking a journey one moonlight night  
My pony saw something that filled him with fright,  
Said he to himself "Here's a terrible sight,"  
And straightway began careering,  
Rearing,  
Fearing  
That we into danger were steering.  
I plied the whip and urged with the rein,  
Said he "alas it is all in vain ;  
I never saw, even on prairie plain  
On which I was once a ranger,  
Danger  
Stranger,  
Save once from a snake in my manger."  
At last however I made him get  
Right up to the object, and when he had set  
His eyes upon it, they only met  
A haystack's friendly greeting ;  
Eating,  
Treating  
Himself, his fears were fleeting.

So we, in a lifetime, often will meet  
Some terrible bugbear, and wish to retreat ;  
But let us go on with steadfast feet,  
In duty's path proceeding,  
Speeding,  
Heeding  
No fancied fears impeding.

---

## THE BUSH-VINE AND THE PINE.

A bush-vine creeping along the ground  
Thus said to a stately pine—  
“ I have gazed upon all the trees around  
With an eye for beauty the most profound,  
But never beheld in all my bound  
A tree-top fair as thine.”

“ I'll therefore twine my loveliest flowers  
About thy stately stem ;  
And freely all my blooming hours,  
For friendship's sake, exert my powers,  
To make thee vie with Eden's bowers  
*In beauty's diadem.*”

“Thou dear little plant,” the pine replied,  
“I’ll love thee as a brother ;  
Come, twine thy tendrils round my side,  
And spread thy fragrance far and wide,  
For we will ever more abide  
Bound up with one another.”

In fond embrace the bush-vine sprung,  
And clasped the stately tree,  
And round and round its creepers clung,  
While free its flowery festoons hung,  
And high o’er all its streamers swung,  
A splendid sight to see !

But soon the stately pine-tree found  
All is not gold that shines ;  
The bush-vine, wishing to leave the ground,  
Had wanted his trunk to coil around,  
And caring nought for the tree he had bound,  
Killed him with choking vines.

Now if you ever a stranger meet  
With flattery, smirk and smile,  
Who offers from *friendship pure and sweet*  
To aid your cause and freely treat,  
Beware ! (he may be a splendid cheat)  
Remember the bush-vine’s guile.

## THE CAT, THE RAT, AND THE MICE.

The plausible cat  
 Agreed with the rat,  
 To work together in unity,  
 To falsely entice  
 The innocent mice,  
 And capture the whole community.

So hand in hand,  
 All over the land  
 As vegetarians sworn, they went,  
 And called to the mice  
 To “ relinquish the vice  
 Of living on animal nutriment.”

The mice came out  
 To their friendly shout,  
 And heard,—(what seemed to astonish them)  
 “ These dreadful sinners  
 Love carnal dinners !  
 We'll eat them up—to admonish them.”

So the cat and the rat  
 They soon got fat,  
 While the mice—they became a rarity ;  
 Till the cat in the end  
 Devoured his friend,  
 As he said, “ for his shocking barbarity.”

Then a grave old mouse,  
Looked out of his house,  
And laughed at the rat's simplicity ;  
Said he, " ere a cheat  
Will hunger for meat,  
He will prey upon those in complicity."

---

## THE WOLVES AND THE SPRINGBOK.

Old Springbok he was an antelope  
On Afric's sunny plain ;  
On level mead, and on gentle slope,  
The speed of a race-horse scarce could hope  
Upon his trot to gain..

Yet the king of the wolves, he vowed in his den  
He would dine on Springbok yet !  
So one fine day he marshalled his men,  
In a long drawn row, to the number of ten,  
And after the Springbok set.

Old Springbok glanced at the wolfish king  
And laughed aloud in scorn ;  
Then cried " you miserable slow-legged thing ;  
If you your rabble would daily bring,  
You never could catch a fawn."

The king of the wolves said never a word,  
But followed his victim's track ;  
The weather was warm, no breezes stirred,  
Yet he ran right on, like the flight of a bird,  
Till the Springbok changed his tack.

Then the wolf who ran at the end of the line  
Nearest the altered course,  
Soon as his leader gave the sign,  
Sprang out at once a-head of the nine,  
Pursuing with all his force.

From morn till noon they followed the chase :  
Wherever the Springbok turned,  
A fresh wolf started with furious pace,  
Till they run him down at the self same place  
Where the wolf king first he spurned.

Now if instead of dodging about,  
He had followed a long straight line,  
The wolves would have had to remain without  
The dinner they made on his carcase stout,  
Or have gone elsewhere to dine.

The same with a boy if he go right on  
And follow a single plan,  
It makes no odds if his speed be slow,  
He will gain the day over many a foe,  
And be a successful man.

But though he may have a philosopher's brain  
With Samson's strength to boot ;  
A Jack of all trades will find to his pain,  
The tree of success he will climb in vain  
And always be near the root.

---

### THE BEAVERS AND THEIR HUNTER.

By a well-built dam the beavers swam  
In a bleak wild tract in the frigid zone ;  
In constant fear of a famine near,  
They lived in their desert wild alone.

Till a hunter came with a dreadful fame  
For taking the beavers alive in traps,  
Or breaking the domes of their conical homes,  
Catching them taking their noontide naps.

The beavers few, full soon they knew  
They were lessening slowly one by one ;  
As the hunter dread, his prisoners sped  
Far off, to where it was known to none.

So in deadly fright at their piteous plight,  
They longed to know where their friends were sent ;  
Till a neighbouring dove, in its gentle love,  
Consented to follow where'er they went.

And he found them brought to a land well fraught  
With woods and streams in the sunlight bright,  
Where free to roam in their new found home  
They met again to their great delight.

For acclimatized, amid all things prized,  
They found themselves a united clan ;  
And the hunter rude to be only a good  
Acclimatization society's man.

So the dove flew back in its northern track,  
And told the rest how their friends had fared ;  
Yet still they dread the hunter's tread,  
And seek from his traps to be longer spared.

But they wait their time in that dreary clime,  
For the hunter will gain them all some day ;  
Who earliest go from the land of snow  
*Will the soonest bask in the warm sun's ray.*

## THE ROBIN AND SPARROW.

A robin and sparrow  
Met chilled to the marrow,  
By frost's frigid arrow,  
    One Christmas night,  
Where the fireworks' gleam,  
In a varying stream,  
Shed a genial beam,  
    Or a lurid light.

And the red-breast cried,  
When the flames it spied,  
“ Let us no more hide  
    In this freezing hole ;  
But, with pinions spread,  
Seek the warmth o'erhead  
By the fire-balls shed  
    As they onward roll.”

O'ercome with the cold  
On the wind-swept wold  
“ I cannot uphold,”  
    Was the sad reply ;  
So the robin alone  
On his journey flown  
Heard an answering moan  
    To his kind “ Good-bye.”

It was all no go,  
For his speed was slow  
(Like arrows from a bow  
    The fire-balls wend) ;  
Till with action warm,  
In the cold snow storm  
He sought for the form  
    Of his quondam friend.

But the reaper dread  
Had before him sped,  
And the bird lay dead  
    On the frozen ground ;  
So the robin brave  
Dug a tiny grave ;  
And the wild weeds wave  
    O'er the funeral mound.

#### MORAL.

From this we may learn  
No efforts to spurn  
Though we fail to earn  
    That for which we push ;  
The charge of a gun  
Will further run  
If fired at the sun  
    Than aimed at a bush.

## THE OAK AND THE WORM.

A grand old oak once boastfully said :

“ Lo, who so great as I ;  
 The beasts of the field love the shade I shed,  
 And the birds of the air they build overhead,  
 And roost in my branches high.

For centuries now I have stood on my ground,  
 Firm against every foe ;  
 The hurricane struck me and had to rebound,  
 The thunder and lightning repeatedly found  
 They never could lay me low.”

“ Don’t boast of thyself,” said a black-headed worm,  
 That slowly crawled along.  
 “ Shut up !” said the oak. “ No contemptible term  
 Is too mean for yon paltry and powerless germ !”  
 “ I’ll prove,” said the grub, “ you’re wrong !”

Then full of revenge as a worm could be  
 He bored through the rough old bark,  
 In the soft, fresh wood of the oak gnawed he,  
 And he worked right on till he girdled the tree  
 With a cavern drear and dark.

And month after month, as he tunnelled away,  
The foliage sicklier grew,  
Till the beasts and the birds were in heavy dismay,  
And the old oak thought of his scorn that day.  
And bitterly rued it too.

Thus killed by the worm, he discovered too late  
What we from him may learn,  
That hundreds of friends mid the good and the great  
May fail to protect from the fury and hate  
Of a foe we despise and spurn.

---

## THE QUARRELSOME OWLS.

Te-wit-a-hoo was a solemn old owl,  
Who lived in a sycamore tree,  
And Whiri-te-whee was a similar fowl ;  
They paired, and had children three.

The father and mother went different roads  
For fine fat lizards and mice,  
And often the family, dining on toads,  
Thought nothing could be so nice.

But famine arose, and food in the house  
Grew scarce as food could be,  
Till nought was left but a tiny mouse  
*A dinner for owlets three.*

And while the parent birds were away,  
Still looking for further food,  
There rose a terrible angry fray  
Among their nestling brood.

Each wishing to get the most of the mouse  
They fought and screamed with rage,  
Till a farmer heard, as he passed their house,  
And carried them off in a cage.

Now, never, alas, with pinions grown  
In liberty shall they roam ;  
Pent up in a cage the captives moan,  
Lamenting their quarrel at home.

---

### THE BEE AND THE BUTTERFLY.

A butterfly late from the chrysalis born,  
While hovering over a flowery lawn,  
Accosted a labouring bee with scorn :  
“ Poor, pitiful thing ! ” said he ;  
“ Of all the absurdities under the sun  
There is scarcely such a ridiculous one  
As working for nothing, without any fun,  
Your singular plan I see.”

“ Oh no,” said the bee, “ it is you that are wrong,  
I gather in honey my life to prolong  
Through terrible winter, when ice fitters strong  
Imprison the fruits and the flowers.”  
“ O never,” the butterfly quickly replied,  
“ Could such a deplorable season betide.  
Impossible ! truly you need not provide  
Against what will never be ours.”

Now, just at this juncture a donkey drew nigh,  
They asked him in judgment the quarrel to try  
Of working-bee *versus* the beautiful fly.

This answer he speedily made—  
“ My sentence is simply—the bee is a fool  
(Though winter is certain, and horribly cool),  
For man is provided to feed, as a rule,  
All creatures in need of his aid.”

“ But does not feed *all*,” said a peacock hard by ;  
“ ‘Tis only those useful, and fair to the eye ;  
But wont he be pleased with this beautiful fly !  
So don’t be alarmed, my friend.”  
“ I wont,” said the fly, and continued his play,  
Neglecting the bee, who kept working away,  
Till late in the autumn, one terrible day,  
Together they chanced to wend.

O, sad was the fate of that fanciful fly,  
 His wings were all torn, and dejected his eye,  
 Uncared for by man he was going to die,  
 No longer a frivolous thing.  
 "O bee," he exclaimed, "I can scorn you no more.  
 You worked in the summer and now have a store.  
 I trusted in beauty ; alas it is o'er !  
 All tattered my golden wing !"

---

## THE RABBIT AND THE PORCUPINE.

A porcupine thoughtlessly making a jump  
 Came down on a rabbit with terrible thump ;  
 Who, lying asleep on the floor of a ditch,  
 Was stuck full of quills by the porcupine's pitch.

Loud screaming, the rabbit in fury exclaimed—  
 " You horrible brute ! I for ever am lamed,  
 And will have my revenge ;" then bursting away  
 He listened to nought the intruder might say.

" How came he to hurt me ? 'Twas, if I am right,  
 By jumping upon me from such a great height."  
 Thus reasoned the rabbit—" If I do the same  
 I'll hurt him as badly ; I'll play his own game!"

Then brim full of fury he rushed to the ditch  
And down on the porcupine came with a pitch,  
But hurt by the piercing quills worse than before  
He died near the spot in a poolfull of gore.

And this was the wisdom he, dying, exclaimed—  
“The strong hitting weak ones, the weaker are lamed;  
While if in their vengeance the weak hit the strong,  
Still woe to the weaker ! they find before long.”

---

## THE COCOA-NUT.

Once a nut with fibre coated  
Down a mighty river floated  
To the deep blue sea,  
And as he the land was leaving  
Piteously he fell a grieving,  
Crying—“ Ah, poor me.

Once I hoped, in happier hour,  
Nursed by sun and tropic shower,  
To have sprouted free,  
And in lofty sylvan beauty  
Well and nobly done my duty  
As a fruitful tree.

Now, alas, my days are ending !  
O'er a boundless ocean wending  
I shall soon decay ;  
While the strong rough coats around me,  
In which nature firmly bound me,  
But prolong the day."

Thus he floated on in sorrow,  
Ever fearing ere the morrow  
He should sink and die ;  
Till the waves of ocean beating  
O'er a coral reef, retreating,  
Left him high and dry.

There a stately palm tree growing,  
All around him freely sowing  
Far and wide his fruit.  
He the coral island planted,  
And his brightest dreams were granted  
As his race took root.

When our best laid plans are broken  
Oft we take it as a token  
Of impending woe,  
When perhaps that very hour  
God will, in his sovereign power,  
Greater gifts bestow.

## JOHNNY AND THE DOG.

Old Bruno he was a terrible dog,  
 His bite was no pretence ;  
 He lay asleep by the side of a log,  
 With his tail stuck through the fence,  
 From whence  
 He dreamed of no offence !

But careless Johnny came down the road,  
 And, seeing how Bruno lay,  
 Commenced a-pulling the tail in a mode  
 That prompted its owner to say—  
 “ Away !  
 You shall rue this insolent play.”

Then careless Johnny was sore afraid,  
 And thought : “ If I let it go  
 He'll be over the fence and attack me here,  
 And work me terrible woe.  
 Oh no !  
 I dare not let it go ! ”

So, holding the tail with all his might,  
 The dog still savager grew,  
 Until the sun at its noontide height  
 Its hot beams o'er them threw.  
 Such stew  
 Till then they never knew !

What was to be done ; he was dying of thirst,  
And Bruno, still fiercer than ever,  
Was raging and roaring as if he would burst,  
Or his "caudal appendage" would sever.  
Then never  
Should Johnny forget it for ever !

At last a farmer discovered the row  
And quickly the struggling broke ;  
But Johnny—he solemnly entered a vow  
He never a practical joke  
Would poke  
Again, upon creatures or folk.

---

## THE LEARNED CROCODILE.

On the banks of the Nile three crocodiles dwelt,—  
A father, a mother, and son,  
And the paterfamilias saurian felt  
A pride that was known to none,  
As the sunbeams dealt to his scaly pelt  
A bronzing bright and dun.

So, calling himself "the Reptilian King,"  
He made a resolve one day,  
The young Prince Crocodile up he would bring  
"In a highly sapient way;"  
He should learn to sing of each primitive thing  
In periods passed away.

He taught him how in the Pliocene days  
The megalosaurus roamed,  
And filled the animal world with a craze,  
When they viewed his back high-domed;  
For a row he could raise with his terrible ways  
Till the calm sea surged and foamed.

Of the plesiosaurus every bone  
In its swan-like neck he knew;  
From the cheirotherium's tooth alone  
The wonderful toad he drew;  
No fossil is known in a Tertiary stone  
But our prodigy *named* it too.

O'er Lias and Oolite, too, he pored,  
And learned their wondrous tale,  
How Pterodactilian pinions soared  
Out on the stormy gale.  
With a classical hoard his mind he stored  
*Till his cheeks grew thin and pale.*

Now just as he got to the Pleistocene,  
And near to the days of man,  
His father and mother a fishing had been  
And into some danger ran,  
For they never, I ween, reappeared on the scene,  
So his orphan days began.

Then poor Prince Crocodile found too late  
He had everything yet to learn.  
What was it to him that he knew the rate  
Of the growth of a fossil-fern,  
When the misery great of a famishing fate  
Met him at every turn !

He had never learned in scholastic bower  
The manner of finding food,  
Or the modern dangers and foes that lour  
Over the saurian brood.  
In that terrible hour he felt the power  
Of life's vicissitude.

At length a man in his path was seen,  
At the human form he stared ;  
From the Cambrian up to the Pleistocene  
No fossil with this compared.  
He gazed on the scene till a javelin keen  
His innermost life-blood bared.

Yet poor Prince Crocodile's fate can show  
A lesson we well may prize ;  
It is not the number of things we know  
That can make us truly wise,  
But of those which go, with our weal and woe,  
Both here and beyond the skies.

---

## THE BEAR AND THE WOLVERINE.

Since Bruin the bear had broken his fast  
A winter of four long months had passed ;  
So rousing up from his dreams at last,  
He prowled abroad for food ;  
But, though he went over abundant ground,  
The game was scarce, and could not be found,  
Till, aching with hunger, he heard a sound  
Like wolves in a swampy wood.

And soon a wolverine, cunning and sly,  
In absent manner came sauntering by,  
With look demure in his half-closed eye,  
A picture of innocent ease !  
" Why, Bruin," he cried, " you look hungry and low,  
My bosom is pained with your aspect of woe,  
So though I have little indeed to bestow,  
*Come, dine with me now if you please.*

Tied up in my swamp is a fine fat lamb ;  
The last of my stock,—I have eaten its dam ;  
But pray take it all, for poor as I am,  
I feel still more for you.”

Affected to tears, old Bruin replied—  
“ I take thine offer, my friendly guide :”  
And trotting along by his comrade’s side  
The lamb was soon in view.

Yet much he marvelled,—the wolverine  
(The stingiest beast that ever was seen)  
Should take to benevolent ways so keen,  
With one of his rivals, too ;  
But hunger was pressing, he rushed on the prey,  
When suddenly something beneath him gave way ;  
The jaws of a bear trap, he found in dismay,  
Around him tightly flew.

“ I thought ’twas a trap,” said the wolverine,  
(While eating the lamb with hungry mein,)  
“ So meeting you, looking so frightfully lean,  
Resolved to spring it with you.”  
“ Alas,” cried the bear, “ I well might have known  
Ne’er leaveth the flesh what is bred in the bone.”

(MORAL.)

Let gifts of misers and knaves alone,  
Or you will have cause to rue.



## THE BEAR AND THE WOLVES.

As Bruin, the bear, arose from his lair,  
After a warm spring night,  
He quickened his pace for a buffalo chase  
With a bison herd full in sight.

So bursting full on a buffalo bull  
He plunged his headlong way,  
And the sage brush flew that aside they threw  
As a ship ploughs off the spray.

But he gained his ground upon every bound,  
And full on the bison sprang,  
Who headlong fell with a piteous yell  
That o'er the prairie rang.

Then tooth and claw, with ravenous jaw  
He swallowed a huge repast,  
And leaving the rest for a future quest  
He entered his cave at last.

At noon he arose with hungry throes  
And made for the prize he won,  
But the sand lay bare in the noontide glare,  
*Of bison flesh found he none :*

For a grey wolf pack who had followed his track  
Had found the unguarded prey,  
And left it alone—when every bone  
In the hot sun glistening lay !

His quest was in vain, till hunting again  
Again a bison fell,  
Then soon he found the grey wolves round  
Yearning for this as well.

But he laughed aloud on the hungry crowd,  
And said, “ I will do you now ; ”  
So he dragged the meat to his snug retreat,  
And gave them a mocking bow.

Thus oft we find an ingenious mind  
Evolve some brilliant plan  
From nature’s laws to aid the cause  
Of easier life to man.

And when with skill and strenuous will  
He brings his scheme to pay,  
Some wealthier man takes up his plan  
And steals the prize away.

Yet there rests a cave where the wise may save  
The produce of their brain,  
And Patent-right is that hold of might  
Which the foe may seize in vain.

## THE DUCKS AND GEESE.

The ducks and the geese  
 They lived in peace  
     By a beautiful English pond ;  
 The banks were steep  
     And the water deep,  
     And the fields were green beyond.

Then came a weed  
 Which grew with speed  
     And filled up all the water,  
 Save a tiny place  
     In the central space,  
     And it grew daily shorter.

A swan, one day,  
 Came down that way,  
     And asked if he, too, might swim ;  
 Said the geese in gloom—  
     “ We have barely room,  
     But we might find space for him.”

Then the eldest drake  
 To the stranger spake—  
     “ You are freely welcome here,  
 Though, alas, the greed  
     Of the tangling weed  
     Has left scant room, I fear.”

Now the weary swan,  
As he glided on  
To the midst of the watery mead,  
Said, "Here is a treat  
I much love to eat,  
'Tis the Anacharis weed."

And so from that hour  
He set to devour  
The weed that caused such woe,  
Until all around  
The watery bound  
His friends could freely go.

So the ducks and geese  
Found joys increase  
By helping the lonely swan,  
And they bless the day  
That he came that way  
When swimming was almost gone.

---

### THE KING OF THE BEAVERS.

Far from the haunts of men  
Armeek, the beaver king, kept his court,  
In a beautiful lake, with a ~~dam~~ like a fort,  
In the midst of a wild rice ten.

A young scout forward came—  
“Oh King,” he cried, “there is mud in the creek,  
And I fear that the uppermost dam may leak.”  
Said the King, “I’ll attend to the same.”

But still he sat lazily down  
Till there came a number of beavers more  
And said, “At the dam is a terrible roar  
As never was heard in our town.”

Said he, “I am well aware  
There is something the matter with that same dam.  
I will send out at once for some rubbish to ram  
In the leak that is probably there.”

Just then a scout rushed in.  
Said he, “Oh King, the dam has broke down,  
And we barely have time to get out of the town  
Ere everything will cave in ! ”

Alas it was all too true !  
With a terrible crash the whole ruin gave way  
And the King of the Beavers was killed in the fray,  
With many a subject too.

A single lump of clay  
Would have stopped that leak when it first began ;  
too, with the many affairs of man,  
*is dangerous to delay.*

## JACKO AND THE CORN.

Jacko was a monkey  
 Living in Gaboon,  
 Belonging to that spunky  
 Species,—the baboon.

Jacko being hungry  
 Wandered forth to root,  
 (Not having iron-mong'ry  
 In shape of guns,—to shoot.)

He saw a barrel lying  
 On a vacant ground,  
 In it slyly spying,  
 Yellow corn he found.

Through the bung-hole squeezing  
 His little monkey paw,  
 A mighty handful seizing,  
 He hurried to withdraw.

But soon he found his wrenching  
 To get it out was vain ;  
 While he was tightly clenching  
 The golden yellow grain.



And whilst he sought so greedily  
The stolen prize to gain,—  
A hunter came full speedily  
And bound him with a chain.

So now poor Jacko graces  
A beast-show o'er the sea,  
And makes most sad grimaces,  
In efforts to get free.

And thinks “ Ah if I never  
Had tried to steal that grain,  
I might be free as ever  
A rooting on the plain ! ”

---

### JACK AND THE RATTLESNAKE.

Around the camp of “ Managerie Jack ”  
Well might the “ varmints ” quake !  
He’d a wonderful knack  
Of forging a track,  
And the trail of a snake  
With a stake  
Could make  
*That the Tempter himself might mistake !*

And when with a serpent recently killed  
He furrowed his sinuous line,  
No reptile who willed,  
However so skilled  
Could hope to divine  
In a sign  
So fine  
An enemy's deep design !

A rattlesnake once of a sociable turn  
Followed a fresh made trail,  
Through tangle and fern  
To the hollow intern  
Of an iron-wood rail  
Like a gaol ;  
A snail  
To traverse well might quail.

“ But where snake *has* been a snake can go ”  
(So thought our reptilian friend)  
Till struggling slow  
Like a pent up flow  
He stuck in the end,  
(At a bend  
Fast penned,)  
Nor back, nor forth could he wend.



## 62 A CANARY'S VALENTINE TO ITS SICK MISTRESS.

Then along there came Managerie Jack  
Gaily along came he !  
As he took the pack  
On his sinewy back  
" What a prize I see  
This will be "  
Said he !  
" What, a fine fat snake for me ! "  
" To my woe " said the snake, " I see my mistake  
That female was less than me ! "  
So one must break  
Where another could make,  
As you all are free  
To see  
May be  
When their qualities won't agree.

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## A CANARY'S VALENTINE TO ITS SICK MISTRESS.

A beautiful vision one wintry night  
Came on its golden wing,  
With eye so bright, with calm clear light,  
It seemed some heavenly thing ;  
It asked me to write what it then would indite,  
*The song* it began to sing.

Yet ere the music afar could float  
It proved me quite in the wrong,  
Like strains from Æolian harp strings smote  
By the wild wind fresh and strong,  
The musical note that Handel wrote  
Could never have framed that song.

My visitant paused in full career  
And gave me a mournful look,  
A piteous glance that seemed to fear  
I must have its aim mistook,  
Or else t'would appear I could not hear  
So never its song could book.

I answered, "Since man's natal hour  
He ne'er could grant that boon,  
For though he has saved full many a flower  
In the trail of the serpent strewn,  
Some angel power in heavenly bower  
Alone could write that tune."

It said, with tones like a silver gong,  
Tinged with a deep despair,  
"If ever a friend to me belong,  
She's gone to the sea-side air,  
And I did so long to send this song  
As a true love offering there."

64 A CANARY'S VALENTINE TO ITS SICK MISTRESS.

I promised at once my aid to lend  
To help that serious need,  
Description fair of the song to send  
And haply we might succeed,  
Being sure in the end **that** darling friend  
Would take the will for the deed.

Then with a bright and joyous look  
The song was renewed with a will,  
Its clear notes rose so wild and bright  
In fancy I hear them still,  
As my visitant ere it took to flight  
Gave me a parting trill.

Was it a spirit of heavenly flame ?  
Was it the Blest St. Mary ?  
Or was it a being of mythical fame,  
Benevolent, fay, or fairy ?  
Oh no ! for it came in an earthly frame,  
Thy gentle, fond canary.

## VERA PAZ.

Almost every incident narrated in the following poem is mentioned in St. John's history of Yucatan. The destruction of the hollow idol was, however, not the feat of Las Casas, but of another Monkish Missionary, and occurred at the great temple of Cosumel Island. For a full account of the magnificent palaces of Maya, its rock paintings and volcano temples, the reader is referred to the beautifully illustrated works of Stevens, Squiers, and other travellers.

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### SCENE 1.

T'was midnight, but the silver moon  
In full fulgence shone  
Adown the dark immense abyss  
In mount Cabamba's cone.  
For ages past those depths profound  
Had seen no fiery flow,  
But deathlike silence all around  
With mystic spell, the crater bound  
Whose rocky barriers grimly frowned  
On waste and tarn below.



No verdure smiled beneath those crags  
In rugged grandeur piled ;  
They reared to Heaven their blasted brows,  
A desolation wild.  
No breezes stirred the still night air,  
The lakelet knew no swell ;—  
Such was the scene the Mayans chose  
For foulest rites of Hell.

Beside a giant altar stone  
Four Pagan priests arrayed,  
In blood-stained robes of sacrifice,  
Pursued their awful trade.  
Around, in shadowy circle ranged,  
A huge Titanic band  
Of hideous statues high were reared,  
The idols of the land.

Beyond the Mayan Kannek,  
With all his chiefs of might,  
Surrounded by their clans, appeared  
To share the dreadful rite,  
For every tribe assembled there  
Had brought their captive train,  
An offering doomed to bathe with blood  
Their dark volcano fane.

Who were those victims? Stalwart men  
Of Spain's adventurous blood,  
Whom bigot zeal and thirst for gold  
Had brought o'er ocean's flood,  
To teach the Christian faith divine  
By blows of despot's rod,  
They made their Indian captives pine  
And work for them the golden mine;  
They knelt before the double shrine  
Of Mammon and of God.

Such were the men who blindly sought  
By dint of hostile might,  
To force the Mayan race to own  
The glorious Gospel light.  
Their warfare failed, and as they stood  
Before that awful bier,—  
Men who had sternly faced a foe,  
Now shrieked in deadly fear.

Yet bravely stood their leader  
With calmly steadfast mien,  
Watching in sullen stately gloom  
Their life's last closing scene.  
The Priest with grasp on quivering heart  
Torn from the opened breast,  
Pouring the life-blood out to soothe  
The demons of the West.

Thus one by one they all had died,  
    His own turn came at last ;—  
When from his limbs with mute surprise  
    He saw his fetters cast.  
And then 'mid solemn silence  
    Right through the idol ring,  
They led him on, to hear his doom  
    From the great Indian king.

“ Go warrior, sole survivor  
    Of all thy vast array,  
Bear back to Guatemala,  
    The tidings of dismay.  
Proclaim what fate awaiteth  
    Kukulkan's impious foes ;  
And all who dare with mighty gods  
    In mortal fight to close.

Go tell these pale-face colonists  
    From empires o'er the sea—  
We sought beyond their bounds to dwell,  
    In peaceful commerce free ;—  
But forced by them to deadly war  
    Henceforth we urge the fight,  
Till all their cruel, sordid souls  
    Are plunged in endless night.



'Tis written on yon painted rock  
    Our idols soon must end,  
Thrown to the earth by ministers  
    A mightier God shall send ;  
But *you* are not the messengers  
    By ancient seers foretold,  
For great Kukulkan ne'er can fear  
    Your secret war-god—gold.

Go ! Thou hast seen our warrior god  
    Drink deep in white man's blood !  
Boast that by Avoh-Salvoh's shrine,  
    Thou hast unfettered stood !  
But never, while our gods have power  
    Comes other alien nigh,  
Unless as captive victim led,  
    On yonder stone to die."

He ceased, and with o'erwhelming roar  
    The death drum's thunder rolled,  
Until the echoing crater shook  
    As in the fires of old.  
Meanwhile they led the Spaniard forth  
    Safe on his homeward way,  
And soon before his longing eyes  
    A Christian hamlet lay.

The Mayan King fulfilled his threat,  
He spread his bands in fight,  
Prowling around the frontier forts  
In secrecy and night :  
Or bursting with o'erwhelming force  
Down on the fertile plain,  
They made a sad and silent waste,  
Then hied them home again.

Three times from Guatemala  
Went a gallant army forth,  
To drive this nest of hornets  
From their borders in the north ;  
Three times with banners flowing,  
In grand array they went,  
And thrice fled back a trembling few  
To tell the dire event.

And still round Mayan's frontier  
Raided the Indian bands,  
And still in mingled doubt and dread  
The settlers held their lands ;  
Until some deed of bloodshed stained  
Each mountain pass and tor,  
And Spaniards in their rage and dread  
Named it the LAND OF WAR.



## SCENE II.

The gathering shades of evening  
O'er Guatemala passed,  
And dark clouds o'er a stormy sky  
Their blood-red fringes cast.  
Full many a portent plainly told  
Some dread tornado nigh ;  
And many an anxious glance was sent  
Over the western sky.

That night from all the country round  
The horse came spurring in,  
And warlike note and armour clang  
Defied the tempest's din.  
The silent sentries grimly paced  
On wall and bastion square ;  
Say ! came they thus with warlike arms  
To face a storm in air ?

No, though the lightning's lurid glare  
Played round the old church tower,  
Whose reeling summit shuddering owned  
The whirlwind's awful power—  
There yet remained some mightier cause  
With wild alarm to fill  
The crowds who watched the flickering flame  
That crowned the northern hill.

From out the stately senate-house  
The lights were gleaming bright,  
And mounted couriers lightly armed  
Rode forth into the night.  
Within the senate all were met,  
A still expectant band,  
As thus in solemn accents spoke  
The viceroy of the land.

“ A fiery beacon’s warning light  
Proclaims from Agua’s hill,  
O'er all the north our fiendlike foes  
Exert their murderous will.  
And burning homesteads’ roaring flame  
Joins with the flashing levin,  
Throughout our northern frontier land  
In one wild cry to Heaven.

What though the army gathering fast  
Will drive our foes amain,—  
'Tis only from more distant points  
To scour the Vega plain.  
And ne'er shall Guatemala rest  
From warlike Indian fray,  
Until their mountain home shall own  
A Christian conqueror’s sway.

By peaceful means in former days  
We sought their land to gain ;  
Three times we planned its conquest,  
And three times fought in vain.  
While after every failure  
More valiant grew the foe,  
As led by one imperial chief  
They worked avenging woe.

We bribed a traitor's arm in vain  
To take that leader's life ;  
Our diplomatic arts have failed  
To work intestine strife.  
For still from far Tayastl's Isle  
To Mitla and Copan,  
The chiefs of every Indian tribe  
Stand round him to a man.

Lastly the small-pox plague went forth  
To tell its direful tale,  
But though its demon spirit sped  
Down Tecpan's lovely vale,—  
And many a Christian settler's hut  
Beheld its dreadful raid,  
Just as it reached the Land of War,  
The fearful fiend was laid.

Thus arms and pestilence combined  
Have failed to crush the foe,  
Whose fierce contemptuous battle-cry  
Fills all our land with woe ;  
We meet to plan their conquest,  
How may the deed be done ?  
And who will bring to God and Spain  
The Mayan empire won."

There were scions in that council-room  
Of princely lines in Spain,  
Who fought through all the western wars  
For glory, not for gain.  
Yet Astec's bravest conquerors  
In silence and in gloom,  
With horror shunned the dreadful task  
As some wide yawning tomb.

Then who was he with saintly brow  
Who forward stepped to speak ?  
Though seventy years had o'er him sped  
Nor voice, nor frame were weak :  
No robe of state was o'er him flung,  
No rapier hung beside,  
But San Domingo's cross and cord  
Around his waist were tied.

The hero-monk Las Casas !

Friend of the conquered race,  
Who spent his long laborious life  
To plead their desperate case.

He oft across the ocean blue  
Had borne their plaintive cry,  
Had travelled every region through  
From Cuba's Isle to far Peru,  
And Europe's mightiest emperor knew  
His sternly glancing eye.

“ Men with a bigot thirst for blood,”  
Las Casas boldly cried,—  
“ Ye wrongly deemed the Prince of Peace  
With murderous arms allied ;  
Your history in the Land of War,  
One scene of fruitless force,  
Condemns in stern indignant tones  
Your fierce tyrannic course.

“ Tis true that Alvarado first  
An envoy sent in vain,  
To bid their king in homage bow  
Before the crown of Spain.  
But could ye hope their warlike prince  
Would do your high command,  
Who witnessed all your cruel deeds  
Throughout your subject land ? ”

He saw the tribes that long before  
Had bowed beneath your sway,  
Doomed in a dreadful servitude  
To swift and sure decay,—  
Or, groaning 'neath a burden  
Too hard for man to bear,  
Beheld them rise against your rule  
In frenzy's wild despair.

Short was the dear-bought liberty,  
For fire and sword ye drew,  
Until their mightiest tribes became  
A poor and helpless few.  
And then the remnant wasted,  
With famine's fearful rack,  
Would wend with breaking heartstrings  
To dreary bondage back.

And now when hope arising  
Among your wretched slaves,  
They fly to desert mountain heights  
Or hide in lonesome caves,—  
Ye hunt them out with savage dogs  
Fattened on human gore,  
Until their dwindling race,—in death—  
*Can feel their wrongs no more.*

But cavaliers—remember  
An awful day draws nigh,  
When all mankind shall stand before  
The judgment seat on high.  
And when your hunted Indian slave  
Shall there with you appear,  
What good will ye have then to weigh  
Against his sufferings here?

Simply—that at our holiest shrines  
Ye made him bow the knee,  
(In solemn mockery of the God  
Who inmost hearts can see ;)  
And then would spread abroad the news  
And of ‘conversion’ tell !  
When only two-fold more than erst  
You left him child of Hell !

But, wipe out slavery’s awful curse  
From all your fair domain ;  
And seek by just and righteous rule  
The Indian’s love to gain’;  
The hosts of Heaven will aid you then  
To spread our glorious creed,  
And make the dreadful Land of War  
A Christian land indeed.”

So spake the good Protector  
'Mid threatening, scorn, and jeer,  
From men whose pride and hatred loathed  
Their own dark deeds to hear.  
Like rock amid the tempest  
With raging billows round,  
That white-haired soldier of the cross  
Unflinching held his ground.

At length to quell the tumult  
The lordly Viceroy rose,  
And brought the long and fierce tirade  
Of insult to a close.  
Yet with no glance of friendship  
He eyed the stern old man,  
But secret hate and covert scorn,  
Through all his language ran.

Said he "the numerous tribes of air  
In council met one day,  
To form a scheme to guard their nests  
From prowling beasts of prey :  
And whilst that host in silence sat  
Revolving many a plan,  
The flying fish with upstart mien,  
*This foolish speech began :*

‘ The eagle wars with beak and claws,  
The condor dwells on high ;  
The bittern deems by swampy streams  
Its young unnoticed lie ;  
Some build for safety high in trees,  
Or far o'er desert plain,  
But I can show a surer way  
Domestic peace to gain.

Go, send a peaceful embassage  
To all carnivorous beasts,  
Imploring them in burning words  
To stop their ruthless feasts.  
They too have offspring, pray them, then,  
To let your young ones live,  
And surely then the noble beasts  
The righteous boon will give.’

Then rose the golden eagle  
With calm majestic scorn,  
‘ Thou hast no nest, no stake with us  
Child of the ocean spawn,  
Yet volunteerest strange advice  
To soothe these beasts of prey,  
We bid thee first inaugurate  
Thy proudly vaunted way.

Unto the ocean-otter  
 Our envoy thou shalt be ;  
 And if success shall crown thy suit,  
 Henceforth we trust in thee.'  
 He wandered forth, but soon was heard  
 An agonizing cry,—  
 The ocean-otter dined that day  
 On fish that loved to fly !

E'en thus, poor Lord of Cumanà,  
 Thou standest here to night,  
 Reft of thine own viceroyalty,  
 That scene of hopeless blight.  
 Thou bidst us sooth with peaceful means  
 Our *human* beasts of prey,  
 I dare thee, like the fabled fish  
 Inaugurate thy way.

Consent, and for a single year  
 The Land of War is thine,  
 For none to enter save the friars  
 Of San Domingo's line ;  
 And if some sign of fair success  
 Within that time ye give,  
 For five more years to end the work  
 Your ruling powers shall live.

Successful, then for government  
The land shall look to thee,  
And all its tribes from slavery's doom  
For ever shall be free.  
But failure o'er thy public life  
Shall cast the funeral sod."  
To which Las Casas answering cried  
" Done ! in the name of God."

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## SCENE III.

In Tecpan's mud-built convent.  
Before St. Mary's shrine,  
Four humble monks were kneeling  
With many a fervent sign ;  
The hue upon their sunken cheeks  
Showed fasts and vigils long,  
Their sack-cloth robes hid many a mark  
Of self-inflicted thong.

Yet, though in humble guise arrayed,  
Four brave hearts beat within,  
Combining love for all mankind  
With sturdy hate of sin.

Self exiled from their country  
And all that men hold dear,—  
They taught their glorious “gospel plan”  
To many an Indian tribe and clan,  
And risks and dangers freely ran  
Devoid of worldly fear.

And now to Blest St. Mary  
They raised their hearts in prayer,  
That she would take their great design  
Beneath her fostering care ;  
That o'er the country of their foes  
The old gods' strongest throne,  
Where Indian war cries wildly rose,  
The holy calm of peace might close,  
And love divine that freely flows  
Triumphant reign alone.

O, mid the blaze of gospel light  
That crowns our northern home—  
Deride not in these Christian men  
Their twilight creed of Rome ;  
Though misdirected, swift to Heaven  
Arose that fervent prayer,  
While to their hearts an answer came  
*That soothed each anxious care.*

## SCENE IV.

Southward of Rabenitza  
A vast volcano lay,  
Whose sharp clear outline seemed to pierce  
The azure dome of day ;  
The grand Sierras all around  
In wild confusion rose,  
Retaining on their rugged heights  
December's glittering snows.

Yet not the awful grandeur  
Of distant views alone,  
Had made the Mayan Kannek's seat  
For beauty widely known.  
By lovely lake and streamlet  
And cool primeval wood  
Of giant oak, and feathery palm  
The grand old palace stood.

Reared on a vast truncated mound,  
Its sculptured glories rose,  
In long clear lines against the sky  
White as Nevada's snows.  
Like fairy citadel it stood  
Watching with anxious care,  
Over a mighty sea of tents,  
The Mayan's annual fair.

For many a distant country,  
And every region round,  
Had sent their manufactured wares  
And produce of the ground.  
From distant Mexico they bore  
The far-famed feathery mail,  
From where along a shelving shore  
The billows of Atlantic roar,  
Cosumel Island sent its store  
Of ocean pearl for sale.

From Peten's inland isle they came  
Where three great temples stood,  
Reared to the demons of the storm  
The water and the wood.  
From Sumasintla's swampy plains  
From Dolfe's rock-bound shore,  
From lost and ruined Mayapan  
The Empire's seat no more.

And Uxmal sent her woven wares  
Of loveliest hue and grace ;  
The hunter from the mountains bore  
The produce of the chase ;  
Palenqué's learned manuscripts  
Of hieroglyphic lore,  
Were piled by Costa Rican gems,  
And far famed golden ore.

Yet interest mainly centred  
    Around one lofty stand,  
Where four bold strangers offered  
    Wares from an unknown land ;  
Wares that no travelling merchant  
    Had ever brought before,  
Of substance strange and value great  
    Unknown in Indian lore.

And when the sun descending  
    Proclaimed the hour to close,  
Around the stranger's lofty stand  
    Increasing wonder rose—  
As decked with shining instruments  
    And priestly robes of white,  
They poured transcendent melodies  
    Out on the silent night.

They sang how, in primeval days,  
    Our grand forefather fell—  
And justice o'er the fallen race  
    Had tolled a funeral knell—  
Had not the Holy Son of God  
    From Heaven in love looked down,  
And with one glorious promise given  
    Removed His Father's frown :

How ages o'er our fallen world  
In long succession passed,  
And tribes of men to nations grew  
And pagan empires vast.  
Yet still were sent a chosen few  
Prophets of love divine,  
Until the Saviour's promised birth  
In Israel's regal line.

Not with a bright angelic pomp  
Clad in the lightning's flame,  
Not 'mid the crash of quivering worlds  
The grand Deliverer came !  
But as a poor and helpless babe  
In lowly manger laid ;  
Reputed son of an artizan  
He learned that father's trade.

They sang how three and thirty years  
He sojourned here in love,  
Telling 'mid signs and wonders great  
Of glorious homes above.  
And how when towards the final goal  
His suffering journey ran,  
He gave himself in dreadful death,  
Guiltless, for guilty man.

How rising from that sacrifice  
In victory o'er the grave,  
He reigns in Heaven our Priest and King,  
Omnipotent to save.  
He hates the human holocaust  
Offered to idols grim,  
Only a pure and contrite heart  
Is offering fit for Him.

Throughout that week of trafficking  
Each evening rose the song,  
While prince and people gathered round  
An eager listening throng.  
“Where have ye learned these wonderous things,”  
Oft was the query made,  
While e'en the Kannek trembling asked,  
“Have ye the truth portrayed.”

They said, “in Guatemala  
Four reverend fathers dwell ;  
They own no proud palatial pile,  
Only a humble cell.  
Unlike the ocean strangers  
They seek not slaves nor gold,  
But still in good and holy deeds  
Their daily life is told.

*They gave the shining instruments  
They taught the wondrous song,  
And glorious strains that far and wide  
The sacred words prolong.  
We are but humble neophytes,  
They would the whole explain,  
And gladly, if to Mayan's land  
You bid them entrance gain."*

The Kannek sent his noblest chief  
Back with the merchants four,  
With large escort, to bear in state  
The Christian fathers o'er.  
"But mark," he told him, "first, if all  
Be true the merchants told,  
Or if within the fathers' home  
Be women, slaves, or gold."

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## SCENE V.

A year rolled by, the scene was changed ;

Cabamba's summits high

Towered around the sacred lake,

The bulwarks of the sky.

Again a mighty host were met

Beside that waveless brim,

Around the giant altar-stone,

And hideous idols grim.

A grand event was hastening,

The hour at length had come

For Maya's gods to prove their power

Or be for ever dumb ;

And all the Indian chieftains,

From Uxmal to Copan,

Around their sovereign Kannek stood,

Who thus his speech began—

“ My friends and people all must know

How late through Maya went

The challenge that our ancient priests

Unto the Christians sent,

To meet them this appointed day,

Cabamba's fane beside,

The merits of contending faiths

For ever to decide.

That whosoever gain the day  
The priests of rival creed  
Shall there be handed o'er at once,  
The conquerors' rightful meed ;  
Either to slay in sacrifice,  
Or hold in slavery's chain,  
Or doomed to any different fate  
The victors may ordain.

The Christian priests consented,  
And ventured here to-day,  
Trusting their viewless, only God  
To speed them on their way.  
So now commence the struggle,  
In great Kukulkan's might,  
Thou priest of Avoh Salvoh's shrine !  
And Heaven defend the right ! ”

“ Mayans ! For ever,” cried the priest,  
“ This awful point decide,—  
Whether to trust the mighty powers  
On which your sires relied,  
Or serve the God of an alien race,  
The God of your bitterest foe ;  
Daring Kukulkan's dreadful power,  
To work your utmost woe.

Will ye forsake the ancient gods,  
Who for a thousand years  
Have helped you on in all your wars,  
And filled your foes with fears ?  
So great, and wise, and bountiful,  
Yet dreadful in the fight,  
For one who now for many a year  
Has quailed before their might ?

And who is He ? He ne'er is seen,  
His very priests confess ;  
And here events have long denied  
His power to ban or bless ;  
So as we never felt His power,  
Nor ever heard His voice,  
And cannot even prove He lives,  
Why in His name rejoice ?

Whereas our gods ye all can see,  
Their idols round me stand,  
A band of watchful sentinels,  
The guardians of the land !  
And O ! Kukulkan, now wilt thou  
Thy consort's priest confess ? ”  
With hollow groan the idol's lips  
Gave forth an answering “ Yea ! ”

“ There! there! ” he cried, “ ye all have heard  
 Your mighty warrior god,  
 Whom if ye now deny, beware  
 His dire avenging rod !  
 Now, if the Christian’s God can speak  
 And shew His presence *here*,  
 Oh then, but not till then, I deem  
 Him worthy of your fear.”

A loud tempestuous cheering hailed  
 The idol votary’s close ;  
 Then promptly, with indignant mien,  
 Las Casas answering, rose,  
 “ We came not here with tricks, to make  
 A stone appear to speak ;  
 Such acts were scorned, unless the cause  
 Were wicked, false, and weak.

But many a time we shewed to you  
 That nature’s plan is one,  
 And by Omnipotent agency,  
 Its perfect work was done ;  
 From the glorious sunshine round us,  
 To the insect’s golden wings,  
 No power but God Almighty  
 Could work such wondrous things.

Your gods are nought but demons,  
Powerless to kill or save,  
Who give no comfort here on earth,  
No hope beyond the grave ;  
Whereas our God Almighty,  
Your God and ours as well,  
Will give His own—eternal heaven,—  
His foes—an endless hell.

We ask you not, with impious hands,  
To wage unholy fight,  
With mighty powers that reign in air,  
Omnipotent in might ;  
We tell you of the one true God,  
Omnipotent alone,  
Who dwells throughout eternal space,  
And not in blocks of stone.

Why call these demons merciful,  
Or great, or wise, or good,  
Whose chief delight it is to smell  
The scent of human blood ?  
And now to show they have no power  
To raise a hand on high,  
Here in his dark volcano home,  
Kukulkan I defy ! ”

Then seizing up a chieftain's club,  
Ere ought his aim devined,  
Full on the war-god's form he sprang,  
And smote the neck behind ;  
A yell came forth, as far around  
The head in fragments flew,  
Leaving within the hollow form,  
A priest exposed to view.

“ There ! there,” he cried, “ ye see the lips  
That gave the answering groan,  
And mark your powerful warrior god,  
How well he guards his own ! ”  
No more he said, for numerous guards  
Sprang forth and penned him round,  
While deafening outcries madly rose  
From all the neighbouring ground.

But lo ! above the painted rock,  
An awful form appeared,  
All stained with blood his flowing robe,  
His hoary hair and beard ;  
His startling, wild, unearthly looks,  
From haggard eyeballs broke ;  
The mighty tumult died away,  
As the old high-priest spoke :

“A score of weary years have passed  
Since first alone I stood,  
High Pontiff of our ancient race,  
Beside Cabamba’s flood ;  
And styled, through Maya’s furthest bounds,  
Kukulkan’s favorite priest ;  
Full many a victim from my hand  
Hath graced the war-god’s feast.

Yet now, o’erpowering all, I feel  
Kukulkan’s reign is done ;  
The moonbeams bright proclaimed his doom,  
I see it in the sun.  
Events foretold by ancient seers  
Wait to be now fulfilled ;  
This day the death-drum’s awful sound  
Will be for ever stilled.

Last night I watched beside the lake,  
A vision o’er me passed,—  
I saw the self-same scene pourtrayed  
At which ye stand aghast,  
And heard a still, small voice exclaim—  
‘ When all these deeds are done  
Then go and serve the mightier God :  
Kukulkan’s race is run ! ’

But now, alas, infirm and old,  
I care no more to stay,  
My last few dreary dregs of life  
Are draining fast away.  
I served the war-god all my life,  
And now will share his doom.  
And great Kukulkan's sacred lake  
Shall monument my tomb."

Then high above the painted rock,  
His hands he forward flung,  
And headlong toward the lake beneath,  
With desperate leap he sprung ;  
A heavy splash, and all was still,  
The waters closed him o'er,  
Save once a skinny hand appeared,  
And sank for evermore.

A long, deep, solemn pause ensued  
Which first the Kannek broke,  
As with his deep stentorian voice  
The crater echoes woke.  
" Cabamba's priests ! make answer,  
Say, was your Pontiff right ?"  
A silence long proclaimed their cause  
Was lost in hopeless night.

He, turning, called his faithful guards  
The idol priests to bind.  
“ Now Christian sire ! decree the fate  
Thy vengeance hath designed ;  
Here at thy mercy stand the foes  
Who oft have sought thy life,  
Who, had they gained the victory now,  
Had doomed thee to the knife.”

“ Warm are our thanks,” Las Casas said,  
“ But know, our God is love,  
And now, on this momentous scene,  
Looks from his throne above ;  
He bids us love our enemies,  
Our greatest foes forgive ;—  
So now to these misguided men,  
I say—‘ Go forth and live.’

“ But first, or e'er ye let them go,  
Their idol fane must fall,  
That they may know the God of Heaven,  
Is powerful over all ;  
Anarchical nations round shall hear,  
The death-drum loud proclaim,  
‘ The ancient gods of Yucatan  
Only exist in name.’ ”

Doomed to a sudden overthrow,  
The giant statues fell,  
While all their votaries silent gazed  
Struck with o'er-powering spell.  
Then Maya's ancient death-drum  
Was burst with awful roar,  
Proclaiming thus to nations round,  
Kukulkan's reign was o'er.

Far down the wild Sierras  
The startling rumour ran,  
"A mightier being hurls to earth  
The gods of Yucatan."  
The traveller in far distant lands,  
By mid-night camp-fire told,  
How great Kukulkan's dreaded power  
Low in the dust was rolled.

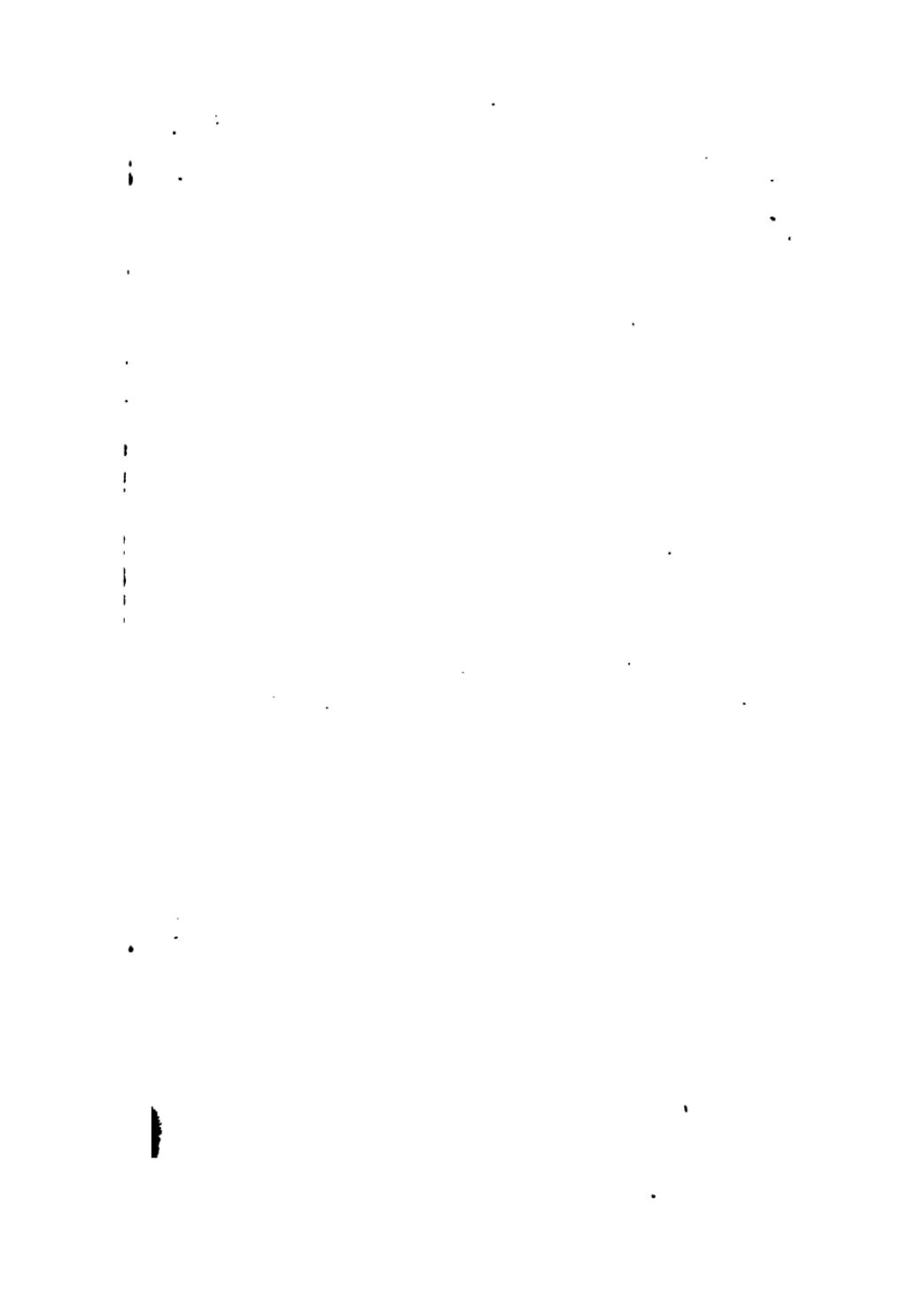
Full many a season passed away,  
Year after year roll'd by,  
But ne'er was heard throughout that land  
The slave's despairing sigh.  
A hundred peaceful years it bore  
The Christian fathers' sway,  
While all the realms and countries round  
Were scenes of blood and fray;

Till the emperor-king Don Carlos—  
And council of Ind decreed,  
That from a stigma, long belied,  
The Land of War be freed,  
That Tierra de la Guerra  
Its warlike name should cease,  
And Tierra de la Vera Paz,\*  
Memorialize its peace !

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\*Literally, Land of the True Peace. This name it need hardly be said it still retains, and to this day—though bounded on the one side by the turbulent Republic of Guatemala, and on the other by its sister States of anarchical Mexico—a large portion of the gentle spirit of its early monkish rulers still seems to hang, like a peaceful halo, round the Indian State of *Vera Paz*.







2

